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## NETWORK A MEETING RECORD

### Network A Plenary Meeting March 18-19, 2004, Lucerne, Switzerland

#### Participants

Wendy Whitham, Australia  
Robyn Versegi, Australia  
Helmut Bachmann, Austria  
Jürgen Horschinegg, Austria  
Christiane Blondin, Belgium (French)  
Luc Van de Poele, Belgium (Flemish)  
Jerry Mussio, Canada  
Michael O’Gorman, Canada  
Pavla Zieleniecova, Czech Republic  
Jørn Skovsgaard, Denmark  
Jorma Kuusela, Finland  
Thierry Rocher, France  
Zsuzsa Hamori-Vaczy, Hungary  
Gerry Shiel, Ireland  
Ryo Watanabe, Japan  
Iris Blanke, Luxembourg  
Felipe Martinez Rizo, Mexico  
Paul van Oijen, Netherlands  
Anne-Berit Kavli, Norway  
Azita Afsar, Norway  
Glória Ramalho, Portugal  
Vladislav Rosa, Slovak Republic  
Guillermo Gil, Spain  
Anita Wester, Sweden  
Erich Ramseier, Switzerland  
Dominique Rychen, Switzerland  
Giray Berberoglu, Turkey  
Jason Tarsh, United Kingdom  
Elois Scott, United States  
Eugene Owen, Network A Chair  
Jay Moskowitz, Network A Secretariat  
Maria Stephens, Network A Secretariat  
Claudia Tamassia, OECD Secretariat

#### Observers

Esther Ho Sui Chu, Hong Kong  
Iris Hoi Ling Tsang, Hong Kong

#### Regrets

Jochen Schweitzer, Germany  
Evangelia Varnava-Skoura, Greece  
Myungjoon Lee, Korea  
Lynne Whitney, New Zealand  
Anna Barklund, Sweden  
Andreas Schleicher, OECD Secretariat

#### Summary of Major Outcomes

Network A had three main points of business at the meeting, discussing: indicators for *Education at a Glance* (EAG) 2005, a strategic plan and elaboration of future activities for the Network, and activities related to the Task Force on Teaching and Learning. The major outcomes were:

- With regard to EAG, the Network recognized that an abundance of data will be available for use in 2005 and the next few years, and members had diverse opinions regarding how to handle issues such as whether or not to focus on mathematics and to utilize TIMSS 2003 eighth-grade data. Therefore, the Network A Secretariat will work with OECD to clarify how many indicators on outcomes can be included in EAG 2005 and the following years and will develop several alternative proposals for indicators, framing them in a multi-year outlook. The Network A Secretariat will share these proposals with members by written consultation.
- With regard to a strategic plan for Network A, the Network A Secretariat will revise the plan (including both the overall mission and the areas for future work) according to members' comments and share the revised plan by email [by the end of April]. In order to advance the strategy, the Network decided to establish working groups related to the three main work areas in the plan: data needs and use, development activities, and analysis, reporting and dissemination. The Network also decided to explore possibilities related to evaluation of PISA and the Network A Secretariat will make a proposal to the Network regarding next steps. This activity will be on a fast track.
- With regard to the strategy for indicators on teaching and learning, the Network did not support a teacher survey if it would be administered in PISA schools, favoring instead the better development of the longer-term strategy and a step-wise approach to studying teaching and learning. The Network Chair will take these comments to the Task Force meeting on March 22-23 in Zürich.
- The dates for the next meeting in El Escorial, Spain are: Thursday and Friday, October 14-15, 2004 for the Network A meeting, and the following Monday through Wednesday, October 18-20, 2004 for the BPC meeting.

## **Welcome and Introduction**

Jay Moskowitz opened the Network A meeting and welcomed new participants and observers, including: Robyn Versegi from Australia, Jorma Kuusela from Finland, Felipe Martinez from Mexico, and Giray Berberoglu from Turkey. He also gave regrets for: Germany, Greece, Korea, and New Zealand. He noted that Eugene Owen would be joining the meeting in time for the afternoon session. Erich Ramseier then welcomed the members to Lucerne on behalf of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education, and Eveline Stekhoffer delivered information on hospitality. Then, the meeting's agenda and the record from the Lisbon meeting were adopted.

## **Update on INES Activities**

Claudia Tamassia took the floor to provide an update on activities in INES and PISA, for those who had not attended the BPC meeting earlier in the week. The full presentation is attached and topics included: the Education Ministers meeting in Dublin on March 18-19; the organizational structure of decision-making bodies in the Education Directorate and INES and PISA projects; updates from Networks B, C and the Technical Group; progress related to the future assessment of adult competencies; PISA 2000, 2003, and 2006; the World Education Indicators (WEI) project; OECD publications; and future meetings. She also noted the PISA symposium for BPC and NPM members in Vienna on October 22-23, 2004. [A copy of the presentation is attached.]

In response, Jerry Mussio raised a question about the evolution of the assessment of ICT literacy to an assessment in science using ICT. It was suggested (and agreed by Claudia) that the current proposal would be more accurately described as a computer-based assessment of science. Also, on this topic, Gerry Shiel suggested that it would be useful if members whose countries had experience in the use of computer-based assessment shared information regarding the impact of computer familiarity on such assessments. Paul van Oijen suggested that the OECD prepare a short (5-10 page) summary of the current proposal to help countries meet the deadline to respond regarding their participation. Claudia said she would take the proposal back but noted the potential difficulty of synthesizing the proposal because of the complexity of the issues at hand.

Regarding future assessment of adult competencies, it was clarified that the expert group would include the full list of nominations by countries, which includes representatives from both labor and education. Jay Moskowitz suggested that Networks A and B would be interested in participating or being kept informed of the progress of the group. It also was requested that additional information on the contents of the OECD handbook on education statistics, which will be published in April, be shared with members. [The table of contents for this publication is attached.] Jason Tarsh noted that the policy briefs prepared for the Ministers meeting are available on the web. [See <http://www.oecd.org/edumin2004>.]

## **Discussion on EAG**

Maria Stephens then took the floor to introduce the proposal for indicators for EAG 2005. First, she noted the first document in this section of the briefing book, which provided the outline for this year's EAG 2004 and noted a few modifications since the Network's last conversation in October. The indicators A5 through A9 are those submitted by or related to Network A's work. The two changes are the exclusion of a second indicator on students' engagement (i.e., correlations with performance and cluster analyses), which ultimately was considered too complex for the EAG format, and the inclusion of an indicator on gender differences across domains, which had been previously published and well-received by countries. The tables have been circulated to National Coordinators for comment, and are in the process of being finalized.

Second, she described the proposal for indicators for EAG 2005, noting it was a first draft outlining some of the options for indicators that could be prepared for the Network to review in October. Potential sources of data include PISA 2003 and TIMSS 2003. She noted two important points: (1) although data from the ALL study also will be available, the proposal suggests to defer indicators from ALL until after the second wave of data collection, when more OECD countries will be represented; and (2) at the moment, no indicator on trends *per se* (e.g., differences in means or percentages at proficiency levels between 2000 and 2003) are proposed, in line with their current de-emphasis in the international report. Maria then reviewed the 8 indicators currently in the proposal, noting that members may want to propose additional indicators, but also suggesting that members would then have to set priorities because of a space limit to 5-6 indicators. She also updated members on input from the OECD Secretariat, which suggested to include an indicator on the between- and within-school variance and not to include information from both PISA and eighth-grade TIMSS results, which was perceived as too confusing in the absence of being able to better describe the differences between the two assessment programs in policy terms. Maria said that the goal of this session was to set priorities

for indicators to be drafted, including suggestions for additional indicators, and turned the floor back to Jay to facilitate discussion.

The Network then had a preliminary discussion, noting in particular, the absence in the proposal of information on TIMSS science, the absence of indicators on individuals' attitudes and behaviors, and the possibility that additional space could be devoted to outcomes indicators in EAG 2005. Gerry Shiel also noted that OECD is commissioning a study to explore the differences between PISA and TIMSS, which might suggest deferring TIMSS eighth-grade indicators until such information is available. He also noted that the problem solving results are still being processed and may or may not be in the international report, which may affect their availability for EAG.

Claudia Tamassia then gave a brief overview of some of the additional data tables that will be available for the Network's use in preparing indicators, including: motivation and engagement in learning, motivational preferences, interest and enjoyment in studying mathematics, self-related indicators, and attitudes toward schooling in general. Jay then called for a roundtable for members to share their main interests for EAG 2005 indicators. During this roundtable, different members expressed their desire for the following:

- Information on trends from PISA;
- Information on equity of PISA results, including gender comparisons, comparisons among students with different social backgrounds or with different native-language or immigrant status;
- Other information on student contexts, including students' familiarity with computers and their attitudes toward and engagement in mathematics;
- More emphasis in analysis on proficiency levels, including, e.g., analysis of students achieving only low proficiency levels;
- The importance of including problem solving results alongside mathematics results; and
- In terms of other studies, information from PIRLS, better utilization of data on science achievement on TIMSS, distinguishing between TIMSS 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades and their potential contributions to EAG, and distinguishing between TIMSS 4-year trends and 8-year trends.

Each of these had the support of at least a few countries. The most frequently mentioned related to immigrant/language status, SES, and attitudes and engagement. There also were some more global comments, as well as some areas of contradictory interests. With regard to the former, for example, several members suggested that it would be helpful to place the proposal for EAG 2005 in a multi-year framework. It also was suggested that EAG should focus on value-added and try to go beyond what is contained in the PISA international report. The issues on which members did not come to consensus included:

- The degree to which the EAG 2005 indicators should be focused on mathematics thematically (as the major domain in PISA and a focus on TIMSS) versus be more broad, giving equal prominence to reading and scientific literacy results;
- Whether or not TIMSS 8<sup>th</sup>-grade data should be included in the indicators—with some finding it less relevant and potentially too complex for presenting with PISA results and others identifying its inclusion as a value added; and

- Whether or not self-related indicators (and perhaps problem solving) should be deferred from the EAG 2005 until more in-depth analysis is done.

In conclusion, it was decided that the Network A Secretariat should work with the OECD Secretariat to determine how much space can be devoted in EAG to outcomes indicators in 2005 and following years and then develop alternative proposals, each in a multi-year context, to be shared with members via written consultation.

### **Discussion on Network A Strategic Plan**

Eugene Owen joined the meeting in time for the afternoon and following sessions and began the conversation about a strategic plan for Network A. He noted that the document in the briefing book included a draft mission statement as well as suggested areas for future work and asked for members' comments on the statement and plan, in turn.

With regard to the mission statement, several members suggested that it should make clear the Network's role vis á vis the PISA Governing Board (formerly, Board of Participating Countries) and the Strategic Development Group and suggested there was a strong need for clarification. Eugene suggested that the Network's focus is on learning outcomes broadly—including but not limited to PISA—and plays an advisory and requesting role with respect to PISA. The analogy of PISA as the now-independent child and Network A as the parent with a new agenda to develop was given. Jay Moskowitz added that one possible role for the Network, not yet included in the plan, could be the formative evaluation of PISA. Jürgen Horschinegg reiterated that the Network should be liberated from PISA in thinking about new directions forward, and Jorma Kuusela requested information also on how Network A relates to other groups in the INES project.

Other questions or issues related to the mission statement arose including:

- The importance of addressing coordination with other studies and, somewhat related, the importance of countries speaking with one voice across different groups in INES and PISA;
- The importance of the third work area (i.e., reporting) in the statement and the necessity to broaden it to include the notion of guidance on these issues and analysis, as well;
- The demand-driven nature of, particularly, the first two work areas (i.e., data and development) and the possibility of drawing more heavily on DeSeCo; and
- The recognition of the utilization of data from national assessments as an important area for the Network to address across the work areas.

With regard to the first work area, some members noted that the strategic plan should call for as integrated an approach as possible to international studies of outcomes across ages and emphasize the importance of national assessment and explore relationships among these and international assessments. The issue of evaluation (e.g., with regard to PISA's utility and lessons for future implementation) was also raised again, and there was no dissent from members to this being part of the strategic plan—though the need for more clarification on such an activity was well noted. It also was strongly urged for this activity to remain on a fast track.

With regard to the second work area, it was suggested that the text in the plan be reformulated so that cross-curricular competencies development and DeSeCo are not treated distinctly, using competencies as an overarching dimension. Particular areas suggested for possible development included: continuation of the explorations regarding teacher/teaching competencies, feasibility work regarding assessing older student populations, such as 17-18 year olds, and how to incorporate and utilize value-added concepts in international assessments.

With regard to the third work area, ideas for work related to better understanding the utility of EAG and other OECD data, better coordinating or sharing of information on related national-level activities (such as repackaging EAG indicators), and making large-scale assessment information useful for practitioners.

During these discussions on the strategic plan, two general questions also were posed to Network members, which were answered in a loose roundtable format. One question was about recent developments in national assessment programs, and the other was about rationales for participation or non-participation in studies other than PISA. [With regard to the former, information on national assessment activities can be found in the current and back issues of the Network A newsletter, available at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/international/INES/index.asp>. Members also are welcome to submit a few sentences of description about their assessment practices to the Secretariat to be appended to this record.] With regard to the latter, reasons for non-participation centered mainly on human and financial resource limits to participation in multiple studies; but also included the particular burden that studies at certain levels (e.g., primary) cause thus prohibiting successful administration; the decreasing prevalence of OECD countries in other studies; and, in fewer cases, concern over the conceptualization of the assessment framework or implementation. Reasons for participation include the perceived value of collecting information from different sources or the importance of international comparisons at certain grades, provided by other studies.

In closing, Eugene said that the mission statement and plan would be revised by the Network Secretariat to reflect members' comments and that working groups would be established to set priorities and implement initiatives in each of the work areas [discussed further in a later section].

### **Discussion on Strategy for Indicators on Teaching and Learning**

Maria Stephens then gave a brief update on the work of the A/C Task Force on Teaching and Learning. She noted the last Task Force meeting in December 2003, where members had decided to continue the group through the Strategic Management Group's newly defined "sunset clause." Since that time, an initial round of revisions was made to the strategy paper and proposal for a teacher survey, which were then shared with the SMG. The SMG's input was translated into a paper by the OECD Secretariat and for the Network's discussion in this session. She described that the paper asks the Task Force to consider what might be done to expand the topics included in a survey of teachers and/or if such a survey should be aligned with PISA, in terms of being conducted in PISA schools timed near the 2006 cycle. Maria noted the goals of this session were, first, to react to the Secretariat's paper so that comments could be taken back to the Task Force meeting the following Monday-Tuesday and, second, to discuss the longer-term part of the

strategy paper and, particularly, if there are any experts or experiences that can be drawn upon in the further development of this part of the strategy.

The Network then had a brief discussion on these topics, with some clarifications regarding the SMG input being provided by Ryo Watanabe and Jørn Skovsgaard, who also are SMG members. With regard to the shorter-term activity to implement a teacher survey, there was some support among members, particularly as a starting point for other longer-term activities. However, several members also pointed out the interest in such a survey going beyond attitudes and perceptions and into issues such as workload, responsibilities, and strategies. At the same time, there was strong resistance to the idea of conducting the survey in PISA schools. One reason is because it was thought that data would be misused to explain PISA results, going against its nature as a cumulative measure—though this was not universal. The Network also continued to support and urge the further development of the second half of the strategy paper, particularly with regard to rationales for work on a value-added study. It also was suggested that a useful approach would be more step-wise, proposing a series of small-scale pilot efforts. The Network A Chair agreed to represent the Network's comments at the next Task Force meeting.

### **Updates on Other Projects**

Eugene Owen then gave a brief overview of the current status of PIRLS, TIMSS, and ALL. He noted:

- With regard to PIRLS: The second meeting of the PIRLS 2006 National Research Coordinators (NRCs) took place in Bratislava, Slovakia in March. The NRCs finalized the reading passages for the assessment, and they also began to develop assessment items related to the passages. Thirty-seven countries participated in the meeting and roughly 40 are expected to sign on for 2006. The next meeting will be in Miami in November.
- With regard to the ALL Study: The first wave of data collection is completed in six countries (United States, Bermuda, Canada, Italy, Norway and Switzerland). There will be a second wave of data collection in 2005, in which 6 additional countries are verbally committed to participate. Eight others are in negotiation. There will be an initial report in February 2005.
- With regard to TIMSS: Data collection for the 2003 cycle is completed. Fifty countries participated in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade assessment, and 27 participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade assessment. Results will be released on December 14, 2004 for both grades and both subjects. The next meeting for TIMSS 2003 will be in June in Santiago to review weighted, scaled results. The second edition of the TIMSS 2003 framework document is available on the TIMSS website (<http://isc.bc.edu>). The science video report will be released in Summer 2004, along with the technical reports for both math and science.

### **Establishment of Working Groups**

In a final session, Eugene Owen returned to the idea of establishing working groups that will be responsible for setting priorities for activities to take forward the Network's strategic plan. Eugene announced that there would be one group for each work area:



- Data needs and use, including, e.g., coordination with other international studies and the role of national versus international assessment data;
- Development work, including, e.g., on teaching competencies, feasibility of assessing older student populations, value-added studies, and competencies for the knowledge society; and
- Analysis, reporting and dissemination, including, e.g., using assessment data to inform practitioners, using EAG and other data at the national level, and collateral data around PISA and national assessments.

He asked for every member to decide which group they would like to be involved with. [A preliminary list of the working group members is attached in the annex.] At future meetings, time can be devoted to face-to-face meetings of each of the working groups. The issue of evaluation will be addressed by the Network A Secretariat and a proposal for next steps will be circulated to the Network for their input.

### **Next Meeting**

To conclude the plenary meeting, Eugene asked for the working groups to meet briefly to discuss what their scopes of work might be and identify a contact person for each group. Eugene then thanked the Network A Secretariat for their work in his absence, and the Swiss authorities for their hospitality in Lucerne.

The next meeting of Network A will be in El Escorial, outside of Madrid, Spain on October 14-15, 2004, with the BPC meeting following on October 18-20. Finally, Eugene thanked members for their cooperation and hard work, and the meeting was adjourned.

### **Annex**

Preliminary list of working groups and members

### **Attachments**

PowerPoint presentation on INES and PISA

Table of Contents for *OECD Handbook for Internationally Comparative Education Statistics*

## Annex – Preliminary List of Working Groups and Members

### Working Group 1, on Data Needs and Use

Iris Blanke (contact)  
Wendy Whitham  
Jürgen Horschinegg  
Jerry Mussio  
Paul van Oijen  
Anne-Berit Kavli  
Gloria Ramalho

### Working Group 2, on Development Activities

Luc van de Poele (contact)  
Helmut Bachmann  
Christiane Blondin  
Jørn Skovsgaard  
Jorma Kuusela  
Erich Ramseier  
Gerry Shiel  
Ryo Watanabe  
Anita Wester

### Working Group 3, on Analysis, Reporting and Dissemination

Michael O’Gorman (contact)  
Pavla Zieleniecova  
Zsuzsa Hamori-Vaczy  
Felipe Martinez  
Giray Berberoglu  
Jason Tarsh  
Elois Scott

NOTE: To members who were not at the meeting, please contact the Network A Secretariat to let us know on which working group you would like to serve.